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CHAPTER XV

THE AZTECS AFTER THEIR CONQUEST

The history of the Aztecs after the Conquest and suggestions for a tour through their domain

Aztec civilization died, but the Aztecs still live. Remove the pure-blooded Indian from Mexico, and you lose two fifths of the population; take out those with Indian blood in their veins, and a bare twentieth of the population will remain. The face of Mexico is an Indian face. Yet travel in Mexico and read its history, and you will see, as if in strata, the impress of the colonial period, the republic, the empire of Maximilian, the dictatorship of Diaz and the modern social thinking of the Revolution. The Indian civilization you do not see, except for its descendants, who are everywhere, who are the Mexican people. Though their outward aspect and their material and social culture are European, the stamp of the Aztec character is on their minds, just as the masonry of broken Aztec temples is built into the walls of their churches.[1]

The original purpose of the Crown and the Church was to convert the Indian population into Spanish citizens with full civic rights. For two generations the authorities almost succeeded in their intent; but finally the individualism so emphasized in European culture broke through their legislative controls, and the white conquerors reduced the Indians to

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636 slavery. Now, after four hundred years, it seems that the present Republican government might achieve by means of their Indian education program the humane purpose formulated under the colonial system.

797 After 1520, when the Conquest was established, the Spaniards began the process of converting a matured Indian culture into a European one. The conquerors were granted lands and in return were supposed to exploit the new territory for the economic advantage of Spain. The Church had in its custody the education of the Indians and their spiritual and corporal welfare. The different monastic orders undertook the control of the Indians in specified localities. Their first steps were to eradicate the local idolatry and to learn the language and customs of their new charges, the better to accomplish conversion.[2]

The friars, especially selected for the task, showed great understanding. They immediately replaced one theological structure with another. The Indians tore down their temples to build churches and monasteries in their place. The use of statues and paintings in Catholic ritual answered so well the requirements of Aztec worship that the friars had great trouble in preventing adoration of the images themselves. (See Plate 26, middle.)

797 636 The studies that the friars made of the Indian customs were admirable, with the Franciscans and Dominicans showing exceptional abilities.[3] The children of Indian tribal leaders were educated in schools to spread the gospel. Under this Spanish control there was no recognition of the old communal land tenure, so the Aztecs were frozen into possession of the lands that they occupied by tribal sanction. The chiefs who had held the usage of the official lands found

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themselves the owners of extensive estates by which their descendants could profit. The Spaniards married into chiefly families, which they believed hereditary, according to their own cultural pattern. In some cases chiefs, like those of Tlaxcala, received coats of arms and patents of nobility from the king for their service in the Spanish cause. Out of 190 coats of arms presented for services during the Conquest of Middle and South America, at least twenty were granted to Indians. In consequence there took place a modest renascence of Indian culture. Indian authors like Ixtlilxochitl and Chimalpahin set forth, in Spanish or Nahuatl, the annals of their forebears as proof of their descent from great Indian nobles and of their right to Spanish honors as well.[4] (See Plate 44.)

The old culture died slowly. In the Indian towns the records were kept in both Spanish and the old Aztec pictographic system to avoid dispute. Dress maintained its old form, except that the friars insisted on trousering the Indians. The rich agriculture was a great boon to the conquerors, who modified it little except for the addition of fruit trees and wheat. Household utensils, like pottery, revealed an engaging fusion of Indian and Spanish ideas, and glazing delighted the Indians, who applied the flux to purely aboriginal forms. Some enchanting little sculptures in clay reveal the old gods and goddesses masquerading as saints in a very thin disguise.

The Indians were used to building temples, and it seemed to them perfectly fitting that they should labor long hours in great numbers to rear structures honoring the new gods. The conversion was so popular that the churches were too small to hold the worshipers, and several conventual temples, like Acolman, Actopan and Tlamanalco, had chapels which

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797 opened on a large court to accommodate converts who gath-
346 ered literally in the tens of thousands. Indian craftsmen
177 found steel tools a superb improvement on their stone hammers and chisels. After the original plateresque architecture shifted into baroque, they reveled in shaping the blocks into ornate shapes, for it was as easy as cutting cheese in comparison to the labor of their aboriginal days.[5]

636 This period of fusion lasted for almost a century. In the
175 meantime the original Conquistadors and their descendants, together with later immigrants to the new colony, had encroached more and more on the natives. The development of the mining industries absorbed thousands of Indians, lured to work for a pittance under noisome conditions which brought sickness and even death. The exercise of the *encomienda*, an arrangement whereby a man had the right to a native's labor in return for his care and the assurance of his religious instruction, led to abuse of the privilege, and the luckless Indians were reduced to serfdom. European diseases, like smallpox, measles and tuberculosis, wiped out great sections of the population, which had no hereditary resistance to such maladies. The Crown and the Church, through its Council of the Indies, sent questionnaires and enacted ameliorative legislation on the basis of the information received, but such laws were more honored in the breach than in the observance. Many of the whites who went to New Spain wanted to get rich and enjoy an easy old age in the homeland. Others who had settled in the country enjoyed an almost feudal existence, no part of the profits and comforts of which they wished to yield, either for the betterment of the Indians or for the enrichment of the Crown. When the British destroyed the Armada in 1588 and weakened Spanish sea power, the com-

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munication between the mother country and the colonies became increasingly difficult. Control was loosened, and laws for the benefit of the Indians were ignored. They became, indeed, an inferior majority, laboring as peons without hope of legal or social justice.[6]

Most of the Indians lost their land and labored on haciendas or in the mines. Some communities like Tlaxcala, having performed notable service to the Crown during the Conquest, kept their land although they had lost social status. Other groups, like the lake peoples of Xochimilco and Chalco, occupied territory which the Spaniards considered unsuitable for their own purposes. A fourth group lived relatively unmolested in primitive little villages tucked away in the mountains. These refugees had taken to the hills not only because of the white conquerors but also to avoid the rising Indian powers in the centuries before the Conquest. The several-score languages and dialects spoken in Mexico are preserved in these tiny villages where inhabitants are only lightly veneered with Christianity.

What remains of Indian culture today is largely the blend of early indigenous practices with the teachings of the friars in the sixteenth century. Yet the physical type and the languages have resisted absorption for four centuries. In Mexico there is hardly a group which remains as completely Indian as some of the North American tribes, but they, after all, have for the most part been conquered and put on reservations only in the last three generations. The groups who had earlier contact with the whites were exterminated many years ago.[7]

The Mexican Indians have endured and have done the work of Mexico for four centuries. They have seen the whites

11:Diaz T,H-5 (1519-1520) 1910
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CHAPTER LXXXVI.

How we began our march to the City of Mexico, what happened to us on the road, and what Montezuma sent to say.

WE set out from Cholula in carefully arranged order as we were always accustomed to do, the mounted scouts examining the country ahead and some very active foot soldiers accompanying them, so that should they come to any bad ground or other obstacle they might help one another; then [followed] our cannon all ready for action, and the musketeers and crossbowmen, and then the horsemen in parties of three so that they could help one another, then all the rest of the soldiers in good order. I don't know why I call all this so clearly to mind, but when writing about war, one feels obliged to make mention of it, so that it can be seen how we marched always "with chin on shoulder." Marching in this way we arrived that day at some ranchos standing on a hill about four leagues from Cholula, they are peopled from Huexotzingo, and I think they are called the Ranchos of Yscalpan. To this place soon came the Caciques and priests of the towns of Huexotzingo which were near by, and they were friends and allies of the Tlaxcalans, and there also came people from other small towns, which stand on the slopes of the volcano near their boundary line, who brought us food and a present of golden jewels of small value, and they asked Cortés to accept them and not consider the insignificance of the gift but the good will with which it was offered. They advised him not to go to Mexico as it was a very strong city and full of warriors, where we should run much risk. They also told us to look out, if we had decided upon going, for when we had ascended to the pass we should find two broad roads, one leading to a town named Chalco, and the other to another

11:Diaz T,H-5 (1519-1520) 1910
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town called Tlamanalco,[1] both of them subject to Mexico; that the one road was well swept and cleared so as to induce us to take it, and that the other road had been closed up and many great pines and other trees had been cut down so that horses could not use it and we could not march along it. That a little way down the side of the mountain along the road that had been cleared, the Mexicans (thinking that we must take that road) had cut away a piece of the hill side, and had made ditches and barricades, and that certain squadrons of Mexicans had waited at that point so as to kill us there. So they counselled us not to go by the road which was clear, but by the road where the felled trees were, saying that they would send many men with us to clear it, and as the Tlascalans were also with us, between them they would clear away the trees, and they said that that road came out at Tlamanalco.

Cortés received their present very kindly and told them that he thanked them for the counsel they had given him, and that with God's help he would not abandon his march but would go the way they advised him. Early the next morning we began our march, and it was nearly midday when we arrived at the ridge of the mountain where we found the roads just as the people of Huexotzingo had said. There we rested a little and began to think about the Mexican squadrons on the intrenched hillside where the earth works were that they had told us about.

Then Cortés ordered the Ambassadors of the great Montezuma who came in our company to be summoned, and he asked them how it was that those two roads were

[1] Bernal Díaz seems to have gone wrong in his topography. At the gap between the two volcanoes the roads probably divided, one (to the right) going by way of Tlamanalco to Chalco, the other (more direct) going to Amecameca. The Spaniards probably took the more direct (the blocked up) road to Amecameca, and did not go to Tlamanalco at all. Cortés, in his second letter, says that he went to Amecameca, and does not mention Tlamanalco.

16:Bandelier E-4 (no date)1880 NU7 Aztec NU7

Our investigations are therefore confined to the limits of the single tribe, and we have selected for that purpose the Mexicans 128

"*Die Culturvoelker des alten Amerika*" (Cincinnati, 1876, '77, '78), has, in regard to the statements made in "*Art of War*" (p. 100, note 17; p. 133, note 152), and in "*Tenure of Lands*" (pp. 412 and 413, also note 56; pp. 417 and 418, also note 69), called my attention to a passage from *Sahagun*, "*Historia general*" (Lib. VIII, cap. XXIV, p. 313), "Habiendo pacificado la provincia, luego los señores del campo repartian tributos á los que habian sido conquistados, para que cada un año los diesen al señor que les habia conquistado, y el tributo era de lo que en ella se criaba y se hacia, y luego elegian gobernadores y oficiales que presidiesen en aquella provincia, no de los naturales de ella, sino de los que la habian conquistado." The author himself, however, gives the explanation of what he intends to designate by such "governors and officials who should preside in said province." In his 12th Book, (Cap. II, p. 5, Vol. III), he says: "La primera vez que parecieron navios en la costa de esta Nueva-España, los capitanes de Moctheuzoma qpe se llamaban *Calpixques* que estaban cerca de la costa luego fueron á ver que era aquello que vino, que nunca habian visto navios, uno de los cuales fue el calpixque de Cuextecati que se llamaba Pinotl, llevaba consigo otros calpixques uno que se llamaba Ysotzin, que residia en el pueblo de Mictlanquauhtla, y otro que se llamaba Teozinzocatl, que residia en el pueblo de Teociniocan, y otro que se llamaba Cuitlalpitoc, este no era calpixque sino criado de uno de estos calpixques, y principalejo que se llamaba Tentlil." In this Sahagun about agrees with *Tezozomoc* (*Crónica*, Cap. CVI, CVII, CVIII, CIX), inasmuch as the latter also states the officers to have been calpixques, th. is, "Stewards" or *gatherers of tribute*. Compare *Alonzo de Molina*, "*Vocabulario*," (Parte IIa, p. 12.) 631 648

The names of these Indians who received Cortés are found nearly alike in all the authors, but we are struck by the fact that many of them call the natives "governors" of Montezuma. I quote *Bernal Diez de Castillo* (Cap. XXXVIII, pp. 32 and 33, Vedia, Vol. II) *Gomara* (pp. 312, 313, 314, etc., Vedia I). *Ixtlilxochitl* ("*Histoire des Chichimèques*," Cap. LXXIX, p. 160). "*Cruautés horribles*," (p. 3.) *Herrera* (Dec. II, lib. V, cap. IV, p. 116; Cap. V, p. 117). *Torquemada* (Lib. IV, cap. XVI, p. 387; Cap. XVII, p. 389, etc.). *Velancurt* (Vol. II, cap. IV, p. 43). *Fray Joseph Joaquin Granados y Galvez*, ("*Tardes Americanas*" Mexico, 1778, 9th evening, p. 234). *Abbate F. X. Clavigero* ("*Geschichte von Mexico*," Leipzig, 1790, a german translation of the Italian original which appeared at Cesena in 1780. Vol. II, Lib. VIII, cap. V, p. 16). These *governors* therefore were but "calpixques," in other words *collectors of tribute*. This is already stated by *Oviedo y Valdés* (Vol. III, Lib. XXXIII, cap. I, p. 259), speaking of Cempoal, "porque los indios è ministros, que alli estaban para mandarlos, eran oficiales è mayordomos de la cibdad de México." The "*Real Ejecutoria de S. M., Sobre Tierras y Reservas de Pechos y Paga perteneciente á los Caciques de Azapuzco, de la Jurisdiccion de Otumba*," (Col. de Doc's, Vol. II, Icazbalceta, p. 5), calls all the Indians in question "enviados por el gran Montezuma."

This explains the evident contradictions of Sahagun.

It is a singular fact, but one amply proven by the records of the conquest, that nowhere did the Spaniards, on their whole march from the coast to Mexico, meet with Mexican *administrators* or *rulers* of subjected tribes. Quotations are useless, we only refer to the remarkable description furnished by Bernal Diez of the events at Quiahuiztlan (Vedia II, Cap. XLVI, pp. 40 and 41), which culminated in the violence done to the "recaudadores de Montezuma." This scene, which is highly characteristic, has been beautifully "remodeled," through a few omissions, by our own great *W. H. Prescott* ("*History of the conquest of Mexico*," 1880, Book II, chap. VII, p. 349). There is, finally, abundant proof of the fact that neither the Mexicans, nor any of their confederate-, ever attempted to change or subvert the organization and mode of government of any of the tribes whom they overthrew. I refer to *Oviedo y Valdés* (Lib. XXXIII, cap. XLVI, p. 502). *Torquemada* (Lib. XIV, cap. VIII, p. 547). *Ixtlilxochitl* (*Histoire des Chichimèques*, (Cap. XXXVIII, p. 274). *Andrés de Tápia* ("*Relacion sobre la Conquista* 631 636 648

16:Bandelier E-4 (no date) 1880 NU7 Aztec NU7

128 proper, who dwelt, as elsewhere established by us, on the partly artificial islands in the lagune of the Mexican valley.[7] Besides the prominence acquired by them in the annals of history, it may safely be assumed that, in a general manner, their Institutions are typical of those of other sedentary tribes.[8]

121 *Tribal* society, based according to Lewis H. Morgan upon KIN, and not *political* society which rests, according to the same author, upon TERRITORY and PROPERTY, must therefore be looked for among the ancient Mexicans. It remains for us to establish its degree of development, its details, and the manner of its working.

In order to comprehend the true nature of these questions, we should secure as much information as possible of the *past* of the tribe under consideration. Institutions are never wilfully or accidentally created, but evolved; in other words, they are the result of growth in knowledge and experience.[9] The great difference existing between tribal society and political is explained as a dif-

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de México," Col. de Doc., Vol. II, Icazbalceta, p. 561, and especially p. 592), "México tenia en su tiempo en el hacer guerra esta órden; que yendo á la guerra, al que se daba de paz no tenia sobre él tributo cierto, sino que tantas veces en el año lo llevaban presente á su discrecion del que lo llevaba; pero si era poco mostrábales mal rostro, y si mucho agradeciaselo. Y en estos no ponia mayordomo ni recaudador ni cosa; el señor se era señor. Los que tomaba de guerra decian *tequitin tlacotl*, que quiere decir, tributan como esclavos. En estos ponia mayordomos y recogedores y recaudadores; y aunque los Señores mandaban su gente, eran debajo de la mano destos de México . . . . ." *Motolinia* (Trat. III, cap. VII, p. 185), *Granados y Galvez*. (5th night, p. 168), a singular picture of purest feudality, for which Gomara may be responsible in part. *Ramirez de Fuenlcal* (*Letter of 4th Nov.*, 1532, 1st; "*Recueil*," (pp. 245, 246, and 247). *Zurita* "*Rapport*," (p. 16), to be compared with Mendieta and Torquemada.

Consequently there was no tendency towards unification or nationalization in all the successful and extensive raids which the Nahuatlaca of the valley of Mexico carried on for a full century. No organic body, larger than the tribe, resulted from these sanguinary forays; because the confederacy itself was not the end, but the beginning of these undertakings. This justifies the view which I shall hereafter advocate in regard to the nature of that confederacy namely: as a mere partnership to carry on the business of warfare the latter in turn being part of the mode of subsistence.

[5] "Based upon territory and property" according to L. H. Morgan, in contra-distinction to tribal-society, based upon "Kin." ("*Ancient Society*," chapter II, page 62).

[6] "*Art of War*," p. 98.

[7] "*Art of War*," p. 150. "*Tenure of Lands*," pp. 421, 422.

[8] "*Ixtlilxochitl* (*Histoire des Chichimèques*," Cap. XXXVI, p. 245). "Ainsi, tout ce qui se dit de Texcuco doit s'entendre aussi des deux autres, ..." *Gomara* (p. 440, Vedia, I). "To speak of the Mexicans, signifies as much as speaking of all New Spain." The title of the section is: "Costumbres de los hombres," and the original text reads: "Hablando de méjicanos, es hablar en general de toda la Nueva-España." Although *Zurita* (p. 5) insists upon the variety of customs among the aborigines,—changing from settlement to settlement, from tribe to tribe,—his own report furnishes the proof of the contrary, and it is evident from the text that he alludes principally to the diversity in languages and dialects.

[9] *Morgan* ("*Ancient Society*," Chap. I, p. 6).